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HOW TO JUDGE VALUE in Silk Fabrics

An Independent Survey

prepared by

THE HOUSEHOLD SCIENCE INSTITUTE

A BASIC SHOPPERS' GUIDE TO VALUE IN SILK FABRICS

The Household Science Institute, an independent research organization incorporated not for profit, established in 1926, has compiled this authentic information from recognized authorities. The facts have been interpreted and the material condensed to provide you with an impartial guide to the essential quality factors to look for in judging value in Silk Fabrics.

IN CHOOSING SILK FABRICS, REMEMBER —

1. Silk is desirable when seeking a fabric having beauty, attractive colors, good draping qualities, and ability to hold shape after wear.
2. Good quality plain weave silks shrink very little when laundered; crepes and many rough surface fabrics shrink considerably.
3. The chemicals in perspiration cause silk garments to become tender and discolored. Pure dye silks are weakened less than heavily weighted materials.
4. Being an animal secretion, silk can be identified by the odor of burning feathers or hair when ignited. Burning rayons and cotton smell either like vinegar or paper according to the type tested.
5. "Spun silk" is made from short lengths of filament and is usually less lustrous and less expensive than "reeled" or long filament silk.

QUALITIES OF SILK

1. Good grades of silk are **very elastic** causing the fabric to drape well, resist wrinkling, and to fit the body well without becoming stretched and baggy at points of strain.
2. Due to **smoothness,** silk is **not easily soiled** and cleans well because dirt does not cling to the fiber.
3. A good quality of pure silk is probably the **strongest fiber known.**
4. Silk can **absorb nearly one-third its weight of moisture and still feel dry** — a desirable quality for clothing.
5. Extremely **lustrous,** but may be given dull finish.
6. **Takes dye readily** giving beautiful rich colors, but often not fast to light and laundering.
7. White and light colored silks **tend to yellow** readily and yellow not easily removed. Caused by age, high temperatures in drying or ironing, poor laundry methods, or iron in the water used in laundering.

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WEAVES

1. Plain weaves: usually sturdiest, especially if warp and filling threads are of equal quality. Includes taffeta, broadcloth, radium, poplin and similar weaves. Heavy cord yarn as in poplin and faille usually of poorer grade fibers and often with core of cotton or other cheap fibers. Gives less service than other plain weaves due to excessive wear and cutting of finer threads where passed over heavy cord. Sheers are often plain weaves and give good service when made of hard twisted yarns requiring best quality fibers.
2. Satin weaves: formed by "floats" (loose surface threads), which reflect light and give high luster. Long floats easily fuzz and roughen from wear.
3. Pile weaves: formed by loops drawn through ground fabric, as for velvet and plush. Pile should be thick, even, firmly fastened, and not readily crushed.

WEIGHTED AND PURE DYE SILK

Weighting of silks with salts of metals as tin, iron and lead makes thin, sleazy, lightweight fabrics feel and appear heavier. The present trend is toward the use of soft fabrics with less weighting. **Loss of strength and elasticity upon exposure to light, perspiration and air is closely related to the amount of weighting present.** Weighted silks drape well and are cheaper than equal weight of pure silk, but deteriorate rapidly with age, do not wear well and present difficult cleaning problems—seldom washable. The label **"Pure Dye Silk",** according to the Federal Trade Commission, should mean silk which contains not more than 10% of weighting, unless in black which shall not exceed 15%. Weighted silks are seldom labeled.

To detect weighting: ash which retains shape of sample of fabric after burning indicates heavy weighting. Pure silk fabrics require little sizing. Materials such as shellac, gums, glue, gelatine, starch or clay, which are not usually called weighting, tend to be removed by cleaning and laundering.

TO AVOID DAMAGING EFFECTS OF

1. **Perspiration:** protect underarm with shields. Clean or launder soiled garments promptly. Dry garments after each wearing — most important if weighted.
2. **Deodorants:** contain chemicals which when moist tender silks, causing splitting when strained.
3. **Light:** keep silks away from sunlight when not in use. Fiber weakened greatly by action of ultra-violet rays in sunlight — accelerated by presence of moisture and weighting. Drapes soon split at sunny windows.
4. **Age:** silks deteriorate with age, tendering being increased by presence of much metallic weighting, especially with tin salts.

CLEANING SILK FABRICS

1. Test washability on sample or inside seam of garment.
2. If washable, squeeze mild, lukewarm suds (90°-100°F) through silk. Rinse well in warm water. Soap left in silks dulls colors and causes yellowing when pressed.
3. Dry silks in the shade and away from direct heat. Moisture increases the deteriorating and yellowing effects of sunlight and heat. Press pongee when dry.
4. Avoid chlorine bleaches — they weaken and yellow silks.
5. Too hot an iron will scorch and yellow silks.
6. Dry cleaning preferable for colored silks, especially dark colors and prints.
7. Prompt cleaning and laundering of soiled garments insures longer service by preventing tendering and fading or yellowing. Stains and spots are most easily removed when fresh.
8. Fabrics weakened by age, light, perspiration or chemicals are most likely to give way in laundering.

Select good quality silk with little weighting for serviceability. A weighted fabric, cheaper than equal weight pure dye silk, may be satisfactory for the garment not expected to last long or receive hard wear. Helpful information regarding the quality of the silk fabrics from which you make your selection can best be obtained at a reliable store.